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CROKER TALKS THROUGH THE JOURNAL ON BRYAN, SILVER, NATIONAL AND LOCAL ISSUES.



James Creelman.
JOURNAL COMMISSIONER.

"Bryan Is One of the Greatest Men America Has Produced—He Understands and Feels for the Toiler and the Toiler Understands and Trusts Him," He Declares.

The Silver Question Will Be Regulated in Time and Congress May Be Trusted to Settle the Ratio—Sheehan May Lead So Long as He Is Able to Do So.

By James Creelman.

FOR hours and hours I have walked the deck of the St. Paul with Richard Croker and listened to the voice of the powerful man whose political influence I have fought unceasingly for twenty years.

It is easy to attack him at a distance, but to argue against his simple, almost primitive, ideas of popular government is like swimming against the ocean tide.

During the seven days of my association with Mr. Croker I learned something of the immense personal force that lies behind his soft gray eyes and still softer voice. I talked with ex-Speaker Reed, with Senator Sewell, of New Jersey, with the bankers and men of wide and deep experience among the passengers. But every time I resumed my walks on the deck with Mr. Croker I became more impressed with his common sense and his marvellous knowledge of men.

He reasons almost like a child, directly from facts to conclusions and from conclusions to facts, without any fine elaboration or strained effort. His statements are blunt, sometimes brutally so.

Never for an instant during our whole week's vacation on the St. Paul did he waver away from the simple idea that political parties exist for the purpose of finding out what the people want and giving them what they want. His whole theory of politics, consciously or unconsciously, seems to be that government should originate at the bottom and work upward, instead of originating at the top and working downward, that the people, not the leaders, should choose the issues and determine them.

Naturally Mr. Croker said many interesting things about the national and local situation which the proprieties of private conversation prevent me from giving to the public, and I have written only that part of his speech which he has authorized me to print.

"Mr. Bryan's great strength," said Mr. Croker, "lies in his sympathy for and knowledge of the plain people. No other American has ever been so close to the masses. He understands and feels for the toiler and the toiler understands and trusts him. I consider him to be one of the greatest men America has produced."

Bryan—No One but Bryan.

"Within the coming year the Democratic party must agree upon its national programme and prepare for the overthrow of trusts and imperialism. I believe that the party will be united and harmonious.

"Naturally I am principally interested in securing a national platform that will be a source of strength to the party in my own State. We hope to carry New York for the Democratic candidate next year. I am satisfied that nothing will be done by the next Democratic national convention that will drive any good Democrat away from his party."

THE SILVER QUESTION WILL BE REGULATED IN TIME AND CONGRESS MAY BE SAFELY TRUSTED TO SETTLE THE RATIO.

"There never has been a time in my experience when the Republican party has so clearly shown its unfitness to be in control of the National Government. Mr. McKinley has turned the war in the Philippines into a partisan scheme for his own re-election. The administration has purposely dragged out the struggle and is spending tens of millions of the people's money without making any serious effort to bring the war to a close this year."

"The Presidential election takes place next year, and the Republican managers are openly making preparations to use the war as a means of working up another outburst of popular enthusiasm just in time to sweep Mr. McKinley into a second term."

War Tax and Rates.

"But the people who are paying the war taxes are beginning to see through the plan. It is almost incredible that a President of the United States is willing to desolate and destroy thousands of homes and to shed the blood of the unfortunate Filipinos chiefly to keep himself and his friends in office; but the facts are plain to be seen by every right-thinking man."

"The situation is so shocking, so indecent from the ordinary American standpoint, that thousands of Republicans are turning away from McKinleyism in disgust. The strongest men in the party have turned their backs on the Administration."

"In New York City the party was never stronger. We will carry all before us this Fall. The metropolis is thoroughly Democratic. The cheap talk about machine politics has lost its force."

"Every great public improvement accomplished in New York—good streets, underground telegraph wires, extension of the dock system, the great Croton aqueduct, the new courts, new parks, low taxes, the Harlem viaduct, the Kingsbridge Bridge, the Speedway, the pleasure docks for the people—are the direct result of machine politics."

"I fail to see anything accomplished by the so-called reformers while they have been in power within the last fifteen years."

Non-Voters Really Aliens.

"One of the most childish and foolish ideas advanced by the 'reformers' is that organization is not necessary to achieve substantial results. A business house is a machine, a church is a machine, a bank is a machine, a newspaper is a machine. The more perfect the machine the more good it can accomplish for the community. Disappointed men use the word 'machine' to stigmatize the regular political organizations of both parties and to create prejudice against politicians."

"I believe that it is the duty of every man in the country to become a politician. It is his highest privilege, and it is his most serious duty. Every good American should be sufficiently interested in the affairs of the community in which he lives to give a little thought and time to his duties as a citizen."

"There are something like twenty thousand men in New York City who disfranchise themselves every year by neglecting to vote. Those are the men who are loudest in the outcry against machine politics. A man who has the right to vote and who wilfully shirks his responsibilities as an elector ought to be treated as an alien."

"The one great need of New York City just now is the right to govern itself. The charter under which the Greater New York was consolidated is a most defective law. The more experience we have of it the more plainly are its faults proved."

"The various departments of the city government should be administered by single heads. That is the only sensible way of conducting the business of the city. It gives sufficient power to the head of a department to carry out his plans, and at the same time he cannot evade responsibility."

"Take the Police Department, for instance. The police force of New York is the finest body of peace officers in the world. But so long as we have a Police Board consisting of two Republicans and two

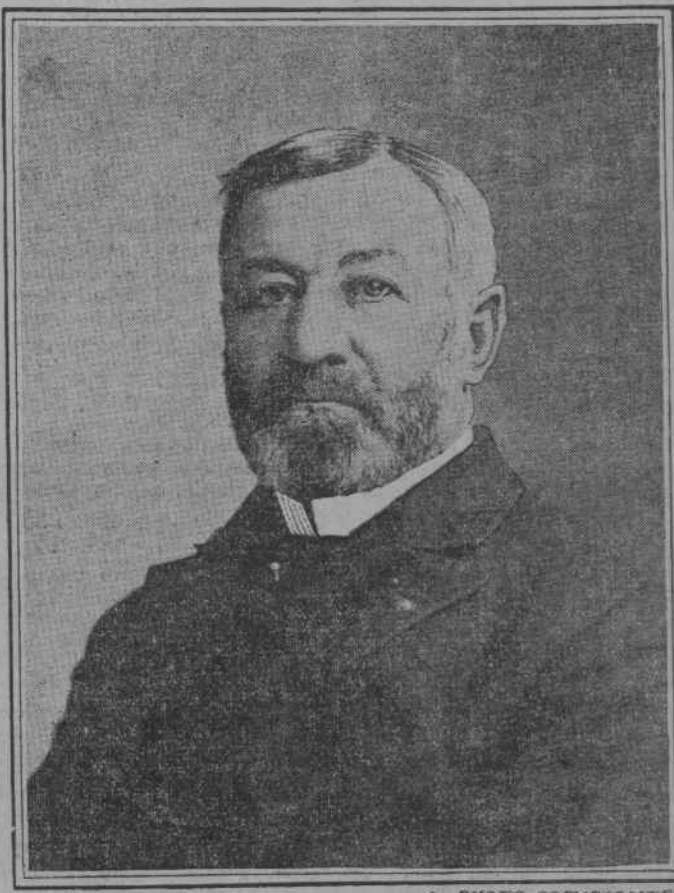


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Richard Croker.

Democrats, the inevitable tendency is toward a struggle for patronage and party power, which wastes the time of the Commissioners and tends to demoralize the uniformed force."

"The splendid condition and economical administration of the Fire Department of the Greater New York under the direction of a single Commissioner shows what can be done by common-sense methods. We should have a single Police Commissioner, with full power. But remember that, while I am in favor of single-headed Commissioners, I make one exception. The Bureau of Elections should be non-partisan. It is not necessary to give the reasons—they are too obvious."

"I have lived for fifty years in New York, and what I say is the result of my constant observation and experience as a citizen."

Home Rule Essential.

"Home rule is just as essential to the successful and economical conduct of New York City as it is in any other kind of business. The city government is simply a business house on a large scale."

"About one-half of the inhabitants of the State of New York live in New York City, and they pay one-half of the State taxes. Yet they are not permitted to run their own government. I appeal to the record of the Democratic members of the State Legislature from New York City to prove that, in all legislation affecting other communities in the State, whether cities, towns or villages, they have invariably accepted and supported the propositions of the communities themselves."

"New York City has never attempted to dictate outside of her own municipal borders. This is a well-known fact. I regard this principle of municipal home rule as the most essential element for good government, not only in New York, but in every State of the Union."

"Business men especially ought to recognize the importance of this, because their experience ought to teach them that no large business can be well managed under the restraints and restrictions of outside interference."

"In Tammany Hall the principle of home rule is absolute. There are a hundred and fifty thousand Tammany Democrats in the city and the people of each district are free to choose their own leaders without help or hindrance from headquarters."

Now for Mr. Sheehan.

"I have read in the newspapers a statement by Mr. Sheehan that, before I left New York for my annual vacation, I gave orders that he should be beaten and deposed from the leadership of the Ninth District."

"Nothing could be more false or more ridiculous. Every leader in Tammany Hall remains leader just as long as he is the choice of the people of his district. The strongest man is always in command. Our only test for leadership is the vote."

"We have no theories about it. We count the vote, and if a leader has lost his district and cannot give a satisfactory explanation he is deposed. The people of each district can be trusted to see that they are not imposed upon by incompetent leaders."

"Mr. Sheehan will remain leader of the Ninth District as long as he is able to carry it. What I think or say about him or what anybody else thinks or says about him has nothing to do with it."

Secret of Tammany's Power.

"Each district governs itself and chooses its own leader. That is the secret of Tammany's power. It is democratic to the core, both in theory and in practice. As a matter of fact, the only time I ever violated the general rule was when I helped to keep Mr. Sheehan at the head of the whole organization against the wish of a majority of the district leaders."

"At one time I was almost the only man in Tammany who was in favor of keeping Mr. Sheehan in the leadership. He ceased to be the leader of Tammany because he could not command the support of a majority of the districts. No outsider will be permitted to interfere in his district."

"A great many Tammany leaders occupy offices under the city government and it is right that they should be appointed, for in a sense they have been elected. Each leader is chosen by the vote of the people of his district, and he comes to the Mayor indorsed by the electors of his own party, voting in primaries under the safeguards of the law."

"How wise it is and how much in accord with the people's wishes and the theory of a democratic government that the Mayor selects so many officials from a body of men thoroughly familiar with municipal affairs who come to him as chosen representatives!"

"On these principles we stand, and are ready to go before the people at all times."

We Don't Need England's Help.

I asked Mr. Croker whether he favored any close alliance between the United States and Great Britain.

"I am absolutely opposed to it," he said. "Nothing could be worse than to form the habit of relying on the friendship of England. We have nothing to gain by it and everything to lose."